

This instrument, quod he, which that thou seest,
Taak in thyn hand, and put thyself therinne
Of this quyksilver an ounce, and heer bigynne,
In the name of Crist, to wexe a filosofre.
Ther been ful fewe, whiche that I wolde profre
To shewen hem thus muche of my science.
for ye shul seen heer, by experience,
That this quyksilver wol I mortifye
Right in youre sighte anon, I wol nat lye,
And make it as good silver and as fyn
As ther is any in youre purse or myn,
Or elleswhere, and make it malliable;
And elles, holdeth me fals and unable
Amonges folk for evere to appeere!
I have a poudre heer, that coste me deere,
Shal make al good, for it is cause of al
My konnyng, which that I yow shewen shal.
Voydeth youre man, and lat hym be theroute,
And shette the dore, whils we been aboute
Oure pryvete, that no man us espie
Whils that we werke in this philosophie.
As he had fulfilled was in dede;
This ilke servant anonright out yede,
And his maister shette the dore anon,
And to hire labour spedily they gon.
This preest, at this cursed chanouns bidding
Upon the fir anon sette this thyng,
And blew the fir, and bisyed hym ful faste;
And this chanoun into the crosselet caste
A poudre, noot I wherof that it was
Ymaad, outhur of chalk, outhur of glas,
Or somewhat elles, was nat worth a flye,
To blynde with the preest; and bad hym hye
The coles for to couchen al above
The crosselet. For, in tokenyng I thee love,
Quod this chanoun, thyn owene handes two
Shul werche al thyng which that shal heer be do.
RANT mercy! quod the preest, and was
ful glad,
And couched coles as that chanoun bad;
And while he busy was, this feendly wrecche,
This false chanoun, the foule feend hym fecche!
Out of his bosom took a bechen cole,
In which ful subtilly was maad an hole,
And therinne put was of silver lemaille
An ounce, and stopped was, withouten faille,
The hole with wax, to kepe the lemaille in;
And understondeth, that this false gyn
Was nat maad ther, but it was maad bifore;
And othere thynges I shal telle moore
Hereafterward, whiche that he with hym broghte;
Er he cam ther, hym to bigile he thoghte;
And so he dide, er that they wente atwynne;
Til he had terved hym, he koude nat blynnne.
It dulleth me whan that I of hym speke,
On his falschede fayn wolde I me wreke,
If I wiste how; but he is heere and there;
He is so variaunt, he abyt nowhere.
At taketh heede now, sires, for Goddes love!
He took this cole of which I spak above,
And in his hand he baar it pryvely.
And whyles the preest couchede bisily

The coles, as I tolde yow er this,
This chanoun seyde, freend, ye doon amys;
This is nat couched as it oghte be;
But soone I shal amenden it, quod he.
Now lat me medle therwith but a while,
for of yow have I pitee, by Seint Gile!
Ye been right hoot, I se wel how ye swete;
Have heer a clooth, and wipe away the wete.
And whyles that the preest wiped his face,
This chanoun took his cole with harde grace,
And leyde it above, upon the myddeward
Of the crosselet, and blew wel afterward,
Til that the coles gonne faste brenne.
Oll yeve us drynke, quod the chanoun
thenne,
As swithe al shal be wel, I undertake;
Sitte we down, and let us myrie make.
And whan that this chanouns bechen cole
Was brent, al the lemaille, out of the hole,
Into the crosselet fil anon adoun;
And so it moste nedes, by resoun,
Syn it so evne aboven couched was;
But therof wiste the preest nothyng, alas!
He demed alle the coles yliche good,
for of that sleighte he nothyng understood.
And whan this alkamystre saugh his tyme,
Ris up, quod he, sire preest, & stondeth by me,
And for I woot wel ingot have ye noon,
Gooth, walketh forth, and bringe us a chalk stoon;
for I wol make oon of the same shap
That is an ingot, if I may han hap;
And bryngeth eek with yow a bolle or a panne
ful of water, and ye shul se wel thanne
How that our bisynesse shal thryve and preve.
And yet, for ye shal han no mysbilleve,
Ne wrong conceite of me in youre absence,
I ne wol nat been out of youre presence,
But go with yow, and come with yow ageyn.
The chambere dore, shortly for to seyn,
They opened and shette, and went hir weye.
And forth with hem they carieden the keye,
And coome agayn withouten any delay.
What sholde I tarien al the longe day?
He took the chalk, and shoop it in the wise
Of an ingot, as I shal yow devyse.
I seye, he took out of his owene sleeve,
A teyne of silver, yvele moot he cheve!
Which that ne was nat but an ounce of weighte;
And taketh heede now of his cursed sleighte!
He shoop his ingot, in lengthe and eek in breede
Of this teyne, withouten any drede;
So slyly, that the preest it nat espide;
And in his sleeve agayn he gan it hide;
And fro the fir he took up his mateere,
And in thyngot putte it with myrie cheere,
And in the water-vessel he it caste
Whan that hym luste, and bad the preest as faste,
Loke what ther is, put in thin hand and grope.
Chow fynde shalt ther silver, as I hope.
What, devel of helle! sholde it ellis be?
Shavyng of silver silver is, pardee!
He putte his hand in, and took up a teyne
Of silver fyn, and glad in every weye

Was this preest, whan he saugh that it was so.
Goddes blessing, and his moodres also,
And alle halwes have ye, sire chanoun!
seyde this preest, and I hir malisoun,
But, and ye vouchesauf to techen me
This noble craft and this subtiltee,
I wol be youre, in al that evere I may.
GOD the chanoun, Yet wol I make assay
Theseconde tyme, that ye may taken heede
And been expert of this, & in youre neede
Another daye assaye in myn absence
This disciplyne, and this crafty science.
Lat take another ounce, quod he tho,
Of quyksilver, withouten wordes mo,
And do therwith as ye han doon er this
With that oother, which that now silver is.
This preest hym bisith in al that he kan
To doon as this chanoun, this cursed man,
Comanded hym, and faste he blew the fir,
for to come to the effect of his desir.
And this chanoun, right in the meene while,
Alredy was, the preest eft to bigile,
And, for a countenance, in his hand he bar
An holwe stikke, taak kepe and be war!
In the ende of which an ounce, and namoore,
Of silver lemaille put was, as bifore
Was in his cole, and stopped with wax weel,
for to kepe in his bisynesse,
And whil this preest was in his bisynesse,
This chanoun with his stikke gan hym dresse
To hym anon, and his powder caste in
As he dide er; The devel out of his shyn
hym terve, I pray to God, for his falschede!
for he was evere fals in thoght and dede;
And with this stikke, above the crosselet,
That was ordeyned with that false get,
He stirred the coles, til relente gan
The wax agayn the fir, as every man,
But it a fool be, woot wel it moot nede,
And al that in the stikke was out yede,
And in the crosselet hastily it fel.
Oll, goode sires, what wol ye bet than wel?
Whan that this preest thus was bigiled
ageyn,
Supposynge noght but trouthe, sooth to seyn,
He was so glad, that I kan nat expresse
In no manere his myrthe and his gladnesse;
And to the chanoun he profred eftsoone
Body and good. Ye, quod the chanoun soone,
Though powe I be, crafty thou shalt me fynde;
I wame thee, yet is ther moore bihynde.
Is ther any coper herinne? seyde he.
Ye, quod the preest, sire, I trowe wel ther be.
Elles go bye us som, and that as swithe,
Now, goode sire, go forth thy wey and hy the.
He wente his wey, and with the coper cam,
And this chanoun it in his handes nam,
And of that coper weyed out but an ounce.
Al to symple is my tonge to pronounce,
As ministre of my wit, the doublenesse
Of this chanoun, roote of alle cursednesse.
He semed frendly to hem that knewe hym noght,
But he was feendly bothe in herte and thoght.

It werieth me to telle of his falsnesse,
And natheless yet wol I it expresse,
To thentente that men may be war therby,
And for noon oother cause, trewely.
He putte the ounce of coper in the crosselet,
And on the fir as swithe he hath it set,
And caste in poudre, and made the preest to blowe,
And in his werkyng for to stoupe lowe,
As he dide er, and al nas but a jape;
Right as hym liste, the preest he made his ape;
And afterward in the ingot he it caste,
And in the panne putte it at the laste
Of water, and in he putte his owene hand;
And in his sleeve, as ye biforne hand
Herde me telle, he hadde a silver teyne.
He slyly tooke it out, this cursed heyne,
Unwityng this preest of his false craft,
And in the pannes botme he hath it laft;
And in the water rombled to and fro,
And wonder pryvely took up also
The coper teyne, noght knowynge this preest,
And hidde it, and hym hente by the breast,
And to hym spak and thus seyde in his game,
Stoupest adoun, by God, ye be to blame,
Helpeth me now, as I dide yow whilceer,
Putte in youre hand, and looketh what is theer.
This preest took up this silver teyne anon,
And thanne seyde the chanoun: Lat us gon
With thise thre teynes, whiche that we han wrought
To som goldsmyth, and wite if they been oght.
for, by my feith, I nolde, for myn hood,
But if that they were silver, fyn and good,
And that as swithe preeved shal it bee.
ANTO the goldsmyth with this eteynes three
They wente, and putte thise teynes in assay
To fir and hamer; myghte no man seyenay,
But that they weren as hem oghte be.
This sotted preest, who was gladder than he?
Was nevere brid gladder agayn the day,
Ne nyghtyngale, in the sesoun of May.
Nas nevere man that luste bet to synge;
Ne ladye lustier in carolyng
Or for to speke of love and wommanhede,
Ne knyght in armes to doon an hardy dede
To stonde in grace of his lady deere,
Than hadde this preest this sory craft to leere;
And to the chanoun thus he spak and seyde:
FOR love of God, that for us alle deyde,
And as I may deserve it unto yow,
What shal this receite coste? telleth now!
By oure lady, quod this chanoun, it is deere,
I wame yow wel; for save I and a frere
In Engelond ther kan no man it make.
No fors, quod he, now, sire, for Goddes sake,
What shal I paye? Telleth me, I preyre.
Ywis, quod he, it is ful deere, I seye;
Sire, at oo word, if that thee list it have,
Ye shul paye fourty pound, so God me save!
And, nere the freendship that ye dide er this
To me, ye sholde paye moore, ywis.
This preest the somme of fourty pound
anon
Of nobles fette, and took hem everichon